Salvaging the Round

Salvaging the round is the only way to rectify terrible situations you get yourself into. First, always sound like you’re winning. Connected to that, you always need to come off as if everything you’re doing is part of a plan. Never act surprised. Second, learn strategies for early rebuttals and writing constructive to give yourself outs.

Reasons why you might need to salvage the round: First, your opponent gives a much better speech. Second, you’re convinced your opponent is better than you. Third, you give a bad speech. Fourth, your judge isn’t buying your strategy, so you need to switch the plan.

Perception is key because first, it has tangible effects on speaker points. Second, judges view you differently in terms of close rounds. A good perception can subconsciously give you close decisions.

To that end, it is important to have a certain mindset about debate. Every argument that your opponent runs is wrong. Your opponent is wrong, too. All of your arguments, however, are right. Look for their mistakes. If you made one, they did too. Mindset not only affects perception, but it also affects your ability to answer arguments by boosting confidence.

Never sound like you’re losing. Be dominant, but not a jerk. Make sure to not turn the judge off to you. The balance is being assertive but not aggressive. Don’t say “I know I dropped this argument.” Say “I didn’t drop this. I conceded it because I don’t need it to win the round.” Next, use dominant rhetoric on the issue you’re winning. “This is the easiest way out of the round. Sign the ballot now.”

You don’t have to win every argument to salvage the round. Collapse the round to rebuttals. Go for arguments you’re decisively winning. Balance the size of the impacts of these arguments: keep in mind the importance of issues, even those which you’re winning. Maybe even go all-in on one big issue. Some examples are theory, pre-standards arguments, or one big impact. The NR specifically is a great opportunity to go for a few big issues and really blow up their size. The 2AR is more limited by time, so you should go for even fewer arguments.

Give yourself outs in the first speech with turns and theory, particularly against a good opponent. Burdens can also give you outs. They say, “All I have to do is do x.” If your opponent drops this, then all you need to show is that you have met the burden. Judges are always looking for the easiest way out. They’re lazy and don’t want to do much work evaluating the round.

Strategies to salvage the round:

Extension comparison: Just because an argument is dropped, your opponent isn’t magically relieved of their ability to extend arguments correctly. When you drop a major argument, you can’t make new arguments against its content, but you can against the extension. People always forget to extend warrants for why a certain argument comes first. In a close round, argue that the quality of your extensions is better than your opponent’s.

Evidence comparison: The first reason to compare evidence is because after collapsing the round, it allows comparison of strength of arguments. Even if you get spread out, you can explain why your cards are better. Compare the quality of claims in the evidence. Argue that your evidence is more specific than your opponent’s. Argue that your author is making a stronger claim to begin with, either by speaking with more certainty or speaking about a larger impact. Compare the quality of the proof that the author offers. Compare the quality of the source or the type of evidence. Different types of evidence are valid for different types of claims. Empirical arguments can be made by almost any source. More complex claims that establish causal relationships, you may need a study published in the journal. Make arguments that empirical arguments should be weighed above analytical arguments. Also, you can explain why analytics ought to be preferred over empirics. Empirical examples, however, don’t take into account externalities. You can also argue that your author is a more valid source. Where is the evidence published? The order from the bottom up is blog, newspaper/magazine, and then journal. Books can vary. Some are like really long journals, but others – like Sarah Palin’s book – are not credible. You can also compare the authors’ fields of expertise con the claim being made.

Link comparison: Weigh the probability of each step in the link chain. Each time they need more cards in the link chain decreases the probability of the impact in the end. Alternatively, you can weigh the link by talking about how many links you have to the terminal impact. You can also argue about by how much of the impact is actually claimed by the link story. Conflating terms refers to different articles talking about similar impacts in different circumstances. You can also argue about the strength of defense and offense coming off a link.

Weighing: Risk is magnitude times probability. The problem that often happens is that people only weigh on one component of the debate. Magnitude is scope and scale. Scope is how many people are affected; scale is how harmful the impact is. Probability is the chance that an impact occurs. Timeframe talks about when the impacts will happen. Strength of link is most commonly used when they concede your evidence but you contest your opponent’s evidence.

Specific strategies:

To deal with spikes in the first speech, figure out which framework arguments aren’t like the other. Another good way to approach spikes is to say that they aren’t full arguments yet, so they shouldn’t be looked to as framework arguments. In cross-examination, many people ask why spikes take out arguments so that you know what arguments you have to get out of, but this strategy doesn’t work because people will morph spikes to exclude positions. Also, you tell your opponent what you’re going to run.

To deal with spikes after dropping them, you should first have some basis set up so that if they apply spikes to your arguments, call them a new argument, so you must have the ability to answer the argument/application. Second, make the argument that you can’t answer every blippy sentence of the AC, so Neg should be able to answer those things. Third, spikes are often the weakest forms of interpretations in the resolution, so use counter-warrants and weigh them against the spikes’ claims.

1AR: Offense, offense, offense. Give yourself enough outs to outweigh refutation mistakes. Throw evidence into the AC that link-turns common NC arguments. Use carded impact turns against Neg.

Theory: A viable option in a few situations. First, if you’re answering an argument that you don’t understand, then you won’t be able to answer it effectively. Also, theory acts as an equalizer. It forces the debate into an area that you can understand. Move the debate onto your own terms if you aren’t comfortable with your opponent’s argumentation. Further, theory can open up more strategic options in the 2AR. If you run theory, maybe you force a mistake in the 2NR when they overcover theory. However, you likely don’t have a shell prepared because if you did, you would be prepared and not need to salvage the round. Learn to run theory on the fly. Figure out why their rule is bad for debate. Arguments that we commonly run theory against are ones that are annoying to debate.